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Garth Ennis John McCrea Darick Robertson

The BOYS

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Garth Ennis Darick Robertson

The BOYS™

FIFTY-FIVE

In a world where costumed heroes soar through the sky and masked vigilantes prowl the night, someone's got to make sure the "supes" don't get out of line. And someone will.

Billy Butcher, Wee Hughie, Mother's Milk, The Frenchman and The Female are The Boys: a CIA-backed team of very dangerous people, each one dedicated to the struggle against the most lethal force on Earth- superpower. Some superheroes have to be watched. Some have to be controlled. And some of them- sometimes- need to be taken out of the picture.

That's when you call in **The Boys**.

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"I EVENTUALLY CAME TO BELIEVE THAT HIS GREATEST AND MOST ENVIABLE SKILL IS KEEPING HIS MOUTH SHUT.

"WHICH IS SOMETHING OF A LOST ART. BUT THE COMMONLY HELD BELIEF THAT GETTING EVERYTHING OFF YOUR CHEST IS GOOD FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH--OR THAT TELLING EVERYONE ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF IS BOTH POSITIVE AND HARMLESS--NOTIONS LIKE THAT HAVE PASSED HIM BY.

"HE LIKES TO ***KNOW:*** INTEL, SECRETS, PEOPLE'S CONFESSIONS, ALL OF IT, BUT HE DIVULGES NO MORE OF HIS OWN BUSINESS THAN HE CAREFULLY CHOOSES TO. WHICH IS WHY, AS I SAID EARLIER, THAT I CAN TELL YOU VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIM THAT YOU AREN'T ALREADY AWARE OF.

"WHAT FOLLOWS WILL THEREFORE BE ENLIGHTENING AND FRUSTRATING IN EQUAL MEASURE."

GTX
GTX
HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIS WIFE NEARLY STRAIGHT AWAY...
NEITHER THE MANNER NOR THE TIMING OF HIS TELLING YOU SERVED HIS AGENDA ONE IOTA?
3-IN-ONE
OIL
WELL... I SUPPOSE...
IT WAS WHEN I WAS TELLIN' HIM I DIDN'T THINK I COULD JOIN THE...
WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM?
WELL, I KNOW HE WAS IN THE ARMY, FOR STARTERS.
NO, THE ROYAL MARINES. BE AS PRECISE AS YOU CAN.
ALL RIGHT, WELL, HE'S ENGLISH. HE'S FROM LONDON, PROBABLY THE EAST END.
HE'S A CLEVER BASTARD AN' HE'S DANGEROUS AS FUCK, AN' HIS WIFE WAS KILLED WHEN SHE WAS RAPED BY A SUPE AN' THE BABY OR WHATEVER IT WAS CAME OUT OF HER. I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS THE HOMELANDER DID IT.
I'M ABOUT NINETY-FIVE PERCENT CERTAIN.
IT WAS.
LONDON'S CORRECT, HE WAS BORN THERE IN NINETEEN SIXTY-FIVE. HE JOINED THE MARINES AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN AND FOUGHT IN THE FALKLANDS WAR A YEAR LATER. HE WAS WOUNDED AND SUBSEQUENTLY COURT-MARTIALLED FOR THE WORST OF A SERIES OF VIOLENT ASSAULTS, WHICH BEGAN NOT LONG AFTER HIS RECOVERY.
ONE BROTHER, DIED IN AN ACCIDENT AGED NINETEEN. MOTHER DIED RECENTLY. FATHER STILL ALIVE.

WAS HIS BROTHER YOUNGER OR OLDER...?

BORN TWO YEARS AFTER HE WAS.

THOSE ARE THE DETAILS I WAS able TO GLEAN BEFORE MEETING HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME. AS WELL AS THE AUTOPSY ON HIS WIFE, WHICH I READ CAREFULLY AND WHICH LEFT ME THOROUGHLY APPALLED.

IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT THERE'S NO RECORD OF THE ASSAULTS HE COMMITTED CONTINUING AFTER HE LEFT THE MILITARY. WHICH EITHER MEANS HE WAS VERY LUCKY, OR...

I CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN, BUT I SUSPECT THAT REBECCA BUTCHER WAS A SPECIAL WOMAN. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HER DEATH WAS ONE OF TWO TRAGEDIES.

HMM.

WHY DID YOU WANT HIM? I MEAN WHAT WAS IT ABOUT HIM IN PARTICULAR, LIKE?

SAME REASON HE WANTED YOU. YOU'D FELT IT.

SUPERHUMANS HAD KILLED OR RUINED SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU. THEY'D SMASHED YOUR LIFE.

AS THEY HAD HIS, AS THEY HAD MINE.

I WANTED PEOPLE WHO HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO BE *INVOLVED.*

"NO IT'S JUST A JOB.

"NO I DON'T TAKE IT HOME WITH ME.

"I WANTED PEOPLE WHO LIVED, BREATHED, ATE AND DREAMED THIS THING."

THIS SOUNDS A WEE BIT LIKE ANOTHER CRUSADE...

WHATEVER IT WAS, IT WASN'T ABOUT TO HAPPEN OVERNIGHT. TAKING ON THE PRODUCTS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY WAS FROWNED UPON, TO SAY THE LEAST: YOU MIGHT RECALL RICK BURNHAM'S REFERENCE TO CAPITALISM.

I KNEW IT WOULD TAKE TIME. FOR THE FIRST FEW YEARS I HAD TO CONTENT MYSELF WITH TWO OPERATIVES AND A FAIRLY LIMITED PURVIEW.

THEN DAKOTA BOB TOOK A HAND, AND SLOWLY--VERY SLOWLY--THINGS BEGAN TO CHANGE.

DAKOTA ***BOB...?***

AN INTERESTING MAN.

"HE WAS A LAST MINUTE REPLACEMENT AS BUSH'S RUNNING MATE, WHEN THE ORIGINAL CANDIDATE MANAGED TO SAY ***THY KINGDOM CUNT*** AT A PRAYER BREAKFAST. YOU'RE PROBABLY A LITTLE YOUNG TO REMEMBER.

"I THINK OF BOB AS THE FIRST OF THE TRULY ACTIVE VICE PRESIDENTS. A LOT OF PEOPLE SAID THAT IF THE ROLES HAD BEEN REVERSED, THE G.O.P. WOULD HAVE HAD NINETY-TWO IN THE BAG AS WELL--BUT FAIR WAS FAIR, GEORGE HAD SERVED HIS TIME."

"NOW, AS A HIRELING OF VARIOUS SPECIAL INTERESTS--THE SAME ONES I ALERTED TO VOGELBAUM'S WHEREABOUTS--BOB WANTED VOUGHT-AMERICAN'S AGENDA TORPEDOED. AS SOON AS WORD REACHED THE AGENCY, RICK GOT US IN TO SEE HIM.

"HIS SUPPORT COULD NEVER BE PUBLIC, OF COURSE, BUT THEN WHAT WE WERE DOING COULDN'T BE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BEGIN WITH. BUT HE COULD SMOOTH THE WAY FOR US, KEEP US OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT..."

HANG ON, IT DIDN'T BOTHER YOU THAT YOU WERE JUST CARRYIN' OUT THESE OTHER WANKERS' AGENDA? THESE FUCKIN' CORPORATE PRICKS?

WHAT CAN I SAY, HUGHIE.

"ARE YOU TURNING INTO SOME KIND OF SOCIALIST NOW...?"

"WHAT BOB BEGAN, CLINTON CONTINUED. HE HAD BACKERS OF HIS OWN TO SERVE.

"OF COURSE, THE TROUBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM POLITICIANS IS THAT THE PRESSURES OF PUBLIC LIFE FORCE THEM TO BLOW HOT AND COLD. WE HAD MORE THAN ONE GREEN LIGHT TURN RED IN MID-OPERATION. YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW THAT WENT DOWN.

"TWO ACCIDENTAL MONICA LEWINSKY REFERENCES THERE, BUT SHE DID INADVERTANTLY COST US DEAR."

HO HO HO. SO THAT MUST MEAN BUTCHER AN' BOB'RE STILL IN TOUCH, THEN. THEY HAVE BEEN ALL ALONG.

VERY, VERY DISCRETELY, AND I IMAGINE BOB'S THE ONE WHO INITIATES WHAT FEW CONTACTS THERE ARE. BUT YES, BOB GOT IN TOUCH IN TWO THOUSAND AND ONE, ALMOST AS SOON AS HE RETURNED TO THE WHITE HOUSE.

AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HIM WHO GOT THINGS GOING AGAIN A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO; I IMAGINE THE AGENCY RECEIVED THE DIRECTIVE JUST BEFORE YOU APPEARED ON THE SCENE.

"MUCH TO THE SURPRISE OF SUSAN RAYNER, WHO'D BEEN BURNHAM'S DEPUTY, AND WHO REPLACED HIM AFTER THE FIFTH HEART ATTACK. I NEVER CARED FOR HER AT ALL.

"BURNHAM WAS LIKE ME, A COMPANY MAN FIRST AND FOREMOST. I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT FOR RAYNER, THE C.I.A. WAS JUST A STEPPING STONE.

"IN THAT REGARD, SHE WAS SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THAT SUPPORTING AN OPERATION LIKE OURS COULD CUT BOTH WAYS..."

BUT BACK TO BUTCHER, AND THE BEGINNING.

ORIGINALLY I RECRUITED HIM AS MUSCLE, YES, BUT I HAD ONE EYE ON THE FUTURE AND I KNEW MY TEAM WOULD NEED A GOOD N.C.O.. I MISJUDGED HIM IN THAT REGARD, HE IS OF COURSE PURE OFFICER MATERIAL.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

WELL...I RECALL AN OLD MASTER-SERGEANT ONCE TELLING ME THAT N.C.O.S LOOK AFTER THE MEN, SO THAT OFFICERS CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET THEM KILLED.

IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAINTENANCE AND COMMAND.

IT WASN'T UNTIL MUCH LATER THAT I REALIZED JUST HOW MUCH HE CAME ALIVE AT THAT POINT: HOW ENGAGED HE BECAME, IN THE CHOICE OF PERSONNEL, THE DEFINITION OF THE REMIT, EVERYTHING.

HE EVEN CHOSE THE NAME. I STILL CAN'T DECIDE IF THAT'S SIGNIFICANT OR NOT.

...IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, IT'S JUST FOR THE PAPERWORK. I THOUGHT ***UNIT X,*** THAT WON'T BE MISTAKEN FOR ANYTHING ELSE...

AW NO, THAT'S FUCKIN' TERRIBLE. WE'LL SOUND LIKE A BUNCH O' WANKERS.

NACHOS

YOU HAVE ANOTHER SUGGESTION?

WELL--*MMF*--WHERE I COME FROM, WHEN SOMEBODY WANTS SOMEONE DONE OVER, THEY TALK ABOUT SENDIN' THE BOYS ROUND. "HARRY'S TURNED INTO A RIGHT MOUTHY TWAT, I'M GONNA SEND THE BOYS ROUND." YEAH?

WHO'S THEY?

WHOEVER WANTS HARRY'S LEGS BROKEN.

WHO ARE THE BOYS?

WHOEVER THEY SEND TO BREAK 'EM.

YOU WANT THE LAST TACO THERE? TA.

NACHO'S

AN' THAT WAS IT?

IF YOU WERE EXPECTING A SECRET ORIGIN, YOU CAME TO THE WRONG PLACE.

WE GATHERED THE OTHERS AND WENT TO WORK.

THERE WAS NO OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE AT FIRST. WE WERE STILL DOING THE SAME JOB.

AND THINGS WENT WELL AT FIRST. M.M. IMMEDIATELY REVEALED HIMSELF AS A HUGE ASSET; I'VE NEVER SEEN HIS EQUAL AS AN INVESTIGATOR, AND I'VE SEEN PLENTY. AND THE FRENCHMAN AND THE FEMALE WERE IDEAL FOR EXTREME SANCTIONS, YOU SIMPLY AIMED THEM AT THE TARGET LIKE A GUN.

WE SAVED SO MUCH TIME.

THE DIFFERENCE... WHEN I DID BECOME AWARE OF IT...WAS BOTH SUBTLE AND GRADUAL.

"BEFORE, THE TWO OF US HAD WATCHED, COLLATED, POLICED AND ONLY VERY OCCASIONALLY TAKEN FINAL ACTION. NOW, CONFRONTATION WAS MORE COMMON. EVENTS SEEMED TO CONSPIRE TO GIVE THE TARGETS LITTLE CHOICE; THE SCREW WOULD BE TURNED UNTIL THE HUMILIATION WAS UNBEARABLE.

"WHERE I HAD PREFERRED TO WARN AND INTIMIDATE, BOTH CONCEPTS WERE NOW OFTEN RENDERED IRRELEVANT: THERE WAS RARELY ANYONE LEFT STANDING TO LEARN THE LESSON. FROM 'EIGHTY-SEVEN TO 'NINETY-FIVE WE KILLED FOURTEEN PEOPLE, WITH EIGHT OF THOSE IN A SINGLE INCIDENT.

"FROM 'NINETY-FIVE TO OUGHT-TWO IT WAS NEARLY THREE TIMES THAT. MAIMINGS WERE SIMPLY OFF THE CHART."

ASSEMBLING IN HEAVEN

SUBTLE AND GRADUAL, AS I SAY. NOT OVERNIGHT.

THE EVENT THAT CRYSTALLISED THINGS FOR ME CAME NOT LONG AFTER BOB'S ELECTION.

"WE'D GOTTEN WIND OF A VOUGHT PAGEANT, ONE OF THESE TRAVESTIES TO WHICH THEY INVITE LOCAL CHILDREN EXPOSED TO COMPOUND V--AS WELL AS THEIR WRETCHED PARENTS, ALL OF WHOM ARE CONVINCED THEY'VE SPAWNED A LITTLE CASH COW. ONLY FIVE OR TEN PERCENT ARE EVER ACCEPTED, BUT FOR US IT WAS STILL A FANTASTIC INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING OPPORTUNITY.

"UNFORTUNATELY, FRENCHIE GAVE THE GAME AWAY--CRUELTY TO CHILDREN MAKES HIM LIVID--AND VOUGHT HIT THE PANIC BUTTON, THEN SKEDADDLED.

"IN THIS INSTANCE, THE PANIC BUTTON INCLUDED A HEFTY DOSE OF SARIN GAS. IT WAS A MASSIVE OVERREACTION AND I BELIEVE THE EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBLE WAS SUSPENDED WITHOUT PAY."

FUCKIN' WONDERFUL.

STILL, SAVES US THE TROUBLE, I SUPPOSE...

COME AGAIN?

WELL, ANOTHER TEN YEARS OR SO AN' WE'D BE WRINGIN' THEIR NECKS OURSELVES, WOULDN'T WE? THE ONES THAT GOT RECRUITED, ANYWAY.

NOT NECESSARILY...

'COURSE WE WOULD.

EXIT

NOT EVERY SINGLE SUPE IS AUTOMATICALLY A TARGET. ANY THAT CONTINUE TO INDULGE IN THE USUAL BANAL HEDONISM--WITHOUT CAUSING ANYONE ANY HARM--ARE NO CONCERN OF OURS.

UNLESS THE V.A. PLANS ARE BROUGHT INTO EFFECT, OF COURSE. WHICH IS WHY WE'RE--

UNLESS?

WELL, THAT DAY IS OBVIOUSLY BOUND TO COME. BUT BY THE TIME IT DOES, THE INTELLIGENCE WE'VE COLLATED WILL HAVE ENABLED US TO IDENTIFY AND NEUTRALIZE MOST OF THE POTENTIAL THREATS IN ADVANCE...

I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU NEUTRALIZE THE POTENTIAL THREATS: YOU FUCKIN' DROP THE LOT O' THEM. EVERY SINGLE ARSEHOLE IN TIGHTS, YOU DO 'EM.

AND HOW EXACTLY DO YOU PROPOSE TO COMMIT THIS PARTICULAR GENOCIDE...?

WELL, YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU? I'M TALKIN' ABOUT IN AN IDEAL WORLD.

BUT YOU WOULD IF YOU COULD?

BLEEDIN' RIGHT I WOULD. ***NO ONE*** SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO WALK AROUND WITH WHAT THEY'VE GOT, IT'S JUST TOO MUCH OF A RISK.

AS THE OLD SAYIN' GOES: WITH GREAT POWER COMES THE TOTAL FUCKIN' CERTAINTY THAT YOU'RE GONNA TURN INTO A CUNT.

YOU THINK HE REALLY WANTS TO...

NO. HE HASN'T DIVORCED HIMSELF FROM REALITY.

I THINK HE ALREADY HAS EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS, AND WHAT BOTHERS ME IS THAT I GAVE IT TO HIM.

I SPENT THE NEXT YEAR UNWILLING TO ADMIT IT, IF I'M HONEST. THEN CAME NINE-ELEVEN, AND EVIDENCE OF THE SEVEN'S INVOLVEMENT, AND AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE...

YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT PARTICULAR DEBACLE, DON'T YOU?

UH, SOME OF IT. I KNOW YOUR...I KNOW YOU LOST PEOPLE.

LONG STORY SHORT: MAEVE TOLD US WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY AND WE DECIDED TO CONFRONT THE SEVEN. THE IDEA WAS TO BLACKMAIL THE HOMELANDER INTO PUBLICLY CONFESSING TO THE FAILED ASSAULT ON THE AIRCRAFT.

WE HAD NO EVIDENCE FROM UNITED ONE SEVENTY-FIVE, BUT WE DID HAVE THE PICTURES OF HIM KILLING THE FAMILIES. YOU'VE SEEN THOSE?

NO...

COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY. THEY SHOW HIM SEXUALLY ASSAULTING AND DISMEMBERING FOUR ADULTS, TWO CHILDREN AND AN INFANT. WE NEVER DID FIND OUT WHO SENT THEM.

AFTER THE INITIAL MEETING, THE LAMPLIGHTER TAILED ME TO THE HOTEL WHERE MY DAUGHTER AND HER CHILDREN WERE STAYING. HE WAITED UNTIL I TOOK HELENA TO DINNER, THEN BROKE IN AND MURDERED THE TWO GIRLS.

DURING OUR NEXT ENCOUNTER, THE HOMELANDER WIPED OUT A DELTA FORCE UNIT THAT HAD BEEN ATTACHED TO US, REALLY JUST TO EMPHASIZE HIS ARGUMENT. A STALEMATE WAS AGREED TO. I WAS GIVEN THE LAMPLIGHTER TO SWEETEN THE DEAL.

HOW, UM... HOW DID THAT GO OVER WITH...?

HE WAS LIVID. YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW HE MUST HAVE FELT, GETTING SO CLOSE TO HIS WIFE'S KILLER.

WHEN OUR FUNDING WAS PULLED AND I QUIT, HE BECAME DOWNRIGHT MURDEROUS.

"HE ASKED ME HOW HARD I'D FOUGHT FOR THE TEAM, BUT HE ALREADY KNEW THE ANSWER. HE BELIEVED I HADN'T THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE DOING WHAT WE DO, THAT I'D SIMPLY HAD IT KNOCKED OUT OF ME.

"HE WAS PARTLY RIGHT ABOUT THAT."

IN FACT, WHERE MY COURAGE REALLY FAILED ME WAS IN MY REFUSAL TO CONFRONT WHAT I'D CREATED. TO TAKE THE BIT BETWEEN MY TEETH AND DISBAND THE BOYS MYSELF.

RAYNER'S PHONE CALL WAS THE ANSWER TO MY PRAYERS.

YOU SEE, WHAT I DID...MY CRIME...WAS TO GIVE BUTCHER A WAR.

A SELF-SUSTAINING, NEVERENDING CONFLICT IN WHICH HE CAN METE OUT THE BRUTALITY AND CRUELTY THAT LIE AT HIS CORE: FOREVER. HE CAN'T KILL THEM ALL AND HE DOESN'T WANT TO.

ALL HE WANTS IS TO GO ON HURTING THE PEOPLE THAT HE BELIEVES HURT HIM.

IN THE END, THAT'S WHAT ALL MY PLANS CAME DOWN TO: EXACTLY THE THING I'D SEEN THE AGENCY DO AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND WAS DETERMINED TO AVOID.

A TEAM. A SPECIAL FORCES UNIT. ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE, JUSTIFYING ITS EXISTENCE THROUGH THE CREATION OF ITS OWN MISSIONS AND AGENDA, IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP.

COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL.

THAT'S NO' WHAT IT'S--

LET'S SEE YOU REIN THEM IN, THEN.

I--I DON'T EVEN WANT TO! I *WANT* THE FUCKIN' SUPES WATCHED, I THINK WHAT VOUGHT'S DOIN'S TERRIFYIN'!

SO DO I.

BUT I SHOULD HAVE DONE IT THE DULL, OLD-FASHIONED, UNGLAMOROUS WAY. I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT RUSSIAN, NOT AMERICAN: FOUND A SEEDY LITTLE MAN INSIDE V.A. AND TURNED HIM INTO MY SPY.

INSTEAD I CREATED YET ANOTHER C.I.A. MONSTER, THE KIND THAT ALWAYS COME BACK AND BITE US ON THE ASS.

YOU REALLY THINK BUTCHER'S THAT...*BAD?*

I'M CERTAIN OF IT.

"THERE WAS A LOOSE END I'D NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH, AND THAT WAS VOGELBAUM HIMSELF. THE THOUGHT OF CIRCUMSTANCES TAKING HIM BEYOND MY CONTROL, MAYBE MY JUST NOT BEING AROUND TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, WAS A CONSTANT WORRY.

"IF VOUGHT GOT WIND HE WAS STILL ALIVE...OR EVEN IF SOMEONE ON OUR SIDE DID, AND HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA TO MAKE OUR OWN SUPES--AN OLD CHESTNUT, BUT ALWAYS WORTH CONSIDERING...

"NOT LONG AFTER WE FORMED THE TEAM I DECIDED IT WASN'T WORTH THE RISK. WE HAD OUR SUPPLY OF V, WE DIDN'T EVEN NEED VOGELBAUM. BUT--"

I STILL DIDN'T QUITE HAVE IT IN ME...SO I SENT BUTCHER INSTEAD.

SENT HIM TO WHAT?

INVITE THE OLD GUY OVER FOR DINNER. MAYBE SING SOME SONGS.

TO DO WHAT YOU SEND BUTCHER TO DO, HUGHIE.

HE WAS DELIGHTED. JUST TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE MAN WHO STARTED IT ALL, WHO INVENTED COMPOUND V--WHO "SHAT THEM OUT IN THE FUCKING FIRST PLACE", HE SAID--

WELL, YOU'VE SEEN HIM SMILE THAT SMILE.

RIGHT THEN.

WHAT'S...?

I'M FUCKIN' STARVIN', D'YOU MIND IF WE STOP FOR A BITE TO EAT?

NO *WAY...!*

THERE IS NO ONE ON EARTH WHO HATES LIKE THAT MAN DOES.

GOD HELP THE HOMELANDER, IF HE EVER REALLY HAS HIM AT HIS MERCY.

SO YES, I THINK HE'S THAT BAD. I THINK HE LOVES EVERY MINUTE OF IT AND HE SEES NO REASON TO STOP.

BURNHAM ONCE COMPARED WHAT WE DO TO THE COLD WAR, BUT ***THAT*** RELIED ON NEITHER SIDE EVER GOING TOO FAR. THERE WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE SOME FINAL SHOWDOWN IN THE RUINS OF THE KREMLIN, NO ***LET US JUST TAKE OUT REAGAN, JUST HIM...***

THE BOYS AGAINST THE SEVEN...AND BY EXTENSION THE C.I.A. AGAINST VOUGHT-AMERICAN...

THAT'S GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY.

WHICH IS WHY I WASHED MY HANDS OF THE WHOLE THING, AND CAME OUT HERE.

OH AYE?

ARE YOU STAYING THE NIGHT?

NO.

D'YOU KNOW SOMETHIN', MISTER MALLORY?

COLONEL MALLORY. I NEVER LEFT THE NATIONAL GUARD.

AYE, WELL WHATEVER.

I THINK YOUR TOUGH OLD BASTARD WAR VETERAN'S AS MUCH OF AN ACT AS YOUR KIND-HEARTED ENGLISH GENTLEMAN. I THINK YOU'RE A FAKE.

REALLY...

I MEAN YOU'RE OUT HERE KIDDIN' YOURSELF YOU'RE A MAN OF HONOR OR WHATEVER, AN' YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN--AFTER ALL THE BLOODY THINGS YOU'VE DONE? THE SHITE YOU'VE LET LOOSE?

I'D SAY THAT WAS ABOUT ENOUGH.

I THINK THE REAL THING'S JUST ONE MORE ARROGANT IVY-LEAGUE PRICK WHO THOUGHT HE HAD THE RIGHT TO FUCK AROUND WI' THE WORLD.

I'M NO' EXACTLY SURE WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IN ALL THIS, BUT IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE WE'RE TALKIN' ABOUT MORE'N THE ONE MONSTER...

OH, WHAT IS IT, YOU AN' ME RIGHT HERE? SQUARE GOES?

ARE YOU STILL TRYNNA PRETEND YOU'RE AN AMERICAN SOLDIER, COLONEL?

HMH.

I GUESS THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU YET, BOY.

AYE, WELL YOU JUST SIT OUT HERE ON YOUR COAST.

CARRY ON LOOKIN' THE PAST IN THE EYE AN' FEELIN' CLEAN.

HI.
HEY...!
MOTEL 6
SO HOW DID IT GO WITH, UM...
IT WAS ALL RIGHT.
ANNIE--
I--
I WORK FOR THE C.I.A.
AH, YOU WHAT NOW--?
IT'S MY SECRET. IT'S WHAT I'VE NO' BEEN ABLE TO TELL YOU.
I'M SORRY.
IT'S WHY I'M SO WORRIED YOU'RE ONE O' THE SEVEN. IT'S HOW I SAW THAT FOOTAGE O' YOU AN' THE REST O' THEM.
I'M PART OF A TEAM SET UP TO MONITOR SUPERHUMANS. THE PRESIDENT'S WORRIED ABOUT VOUGHT-AMERICAN, ABOUT THEM TRYNNA USE SUPES IN THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY.
I WAS RECRUITED AFTER ROBIN GOT KILLED. I'VE BEEN DOIN' IT ABOUT AS LONG AS YOU'VE BEEN WITH THE SEVEN. WE'RE THE PEOPLE MADE SUCH A MESS O' TEENAGE KIX, WE WERE INVOLVED WI' THE G-MEN AN' PAYBACK GETTIN' WIPED OUT.
I KILLED THE BLARNEY COCK MYSELF, IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD.

EXIT

WH... WHAT...?

I'M SORRY. I STOOD IN JUDGMENT ON YOU AN' I WAS JUST AS DISHONEST AS YOU WERE, PROBABLY MORE SO.

STOP FOR A SECOND.

WHAT?

I'M--

IN THE *C.I.A.?*

AYE.

I'M SORRY TO JUST TELL YOU LIKE THIS, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE WAY I LOST THE HEAD WHEN YOU CAME CLEAN WI' ME. BUT YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH.

AN' NOW THAT I'VE TOLD YOU, I NEED YOU TO PROMISE YOU'LL DO SOMETHIN' FOR ME.

I WANT YOU TO GET AS FAR AWAY FROM ME AS YOU CAN. DON'T GO ANYWHERE NEAR THE SEVEN. DON'T EVEN GO BACK TO NEW YORK.

JUST STAY AWAY AN' STAY HIDDEN UNTIL EVERYTHING'S FINALLY OVER AN' DONE WI'.

I CAN'T JUST--THIS IS CRAZY--

WAIT A MINUTE, UNTIL *WHAT'S* OVER AND DONE WITH...?

I'VE BEEN TELLIN' YOU NO' EVERYONE LIKES SUPES--WELL, THE GUYS I WORK WITH DOWNRIGHT FUCKIN' LOATHE THEM. SOMETHIN'S GONNA HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER, IT HAS TO DO WI' WHAT'S GOIN' ON IN THE WHITE HOUSE AN' HOW MUCH OF A BAM THE HOMELANDER IS.

THERE'S OTHER THINGS TOO, BUT THE POINT IS IT'S GONNA BE DIABOLICAL. THERE'S GONNA BE ALL SORTS O' FOLK GETTIN' HURT, THERE'S GONNA BE ***DEATHS***...

OKAY... LOOK...

I'M HAVING TROUBLE PROCESSING THIS, I THINK YOU MAY HAVE GONE COMPLETELY NUTS. BUT WHETHER YOU HAVE OR NOT, THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO GO AWAY AND ***LEAVE YOU***...I MEAN IF YOU ARE TELLING THE TRUTH AND THERE'S SOME KIND OF TROUBLE COMING, I CAN'T JUST--

STOP.

THIS IS NO' THE TIME TO PLAY SUPERHERO. TO PUT A FUCKIN' CAPE ON AN' ***DO THE RIGHT THING.***

IT'S THE TIME TO RUN AWAY AN' HIDE UNDER THE BED, AN' HOPE THE WORLD'S STILL IN ONE PIECE WHEN YOU COME OUT AGAIN.

IF YOU KNEW THESE BOYS...IF YOU'D SEEN WHAT THEY WERE CAPABLE OF, OR WHAT SOME O' THE SUPES'VE BEEN UP TO OVER THE YEARS...

HUGHIE--

I CAN'T HAVE YOU GETTIN' HURT, ANNIE. I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF IT.

BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.

NO MATTER WHAT'S GONE ON BETWEEN US, I STILL LOVE YOU.

WHAT'D YOU TELL HIM?

EVERYTHING.

YEAH.

I WONDERED WHY M.M. WAS GIVIN' IN SO EASILY. ONLY WAY IT MADE SENSE WAS IF HE'D HANDED THINGS OVER TO YOU.

I REALLY DON'T GIVE A FUCK.

I'M NINETY-ONE YEARS OLD AND IT FEELS LIKE TWICE THAT. MY DAUGHTER NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN, AND SHE'S THE ONLY PERSON I REALLY CARE ABOUT.

EVEN WITH ALL THE THINGS I GOT WRONG, MY LIFE DOESN'T EVEN QUALIFY AS A JOKE OR A LIE. IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A LUMP OF DOGSHIT.

SO WHY DON'T YOU DO ME A FAVOR AND GET IT THE HELL OVER WITH, MM?

BARBARY COAST
conclusion